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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

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PRE-ELECTION PROTEST RALLY HELD AT CONCORDIA

Montréal / November 21, 1985 --- Concordia University students, faculty and administrative staff joined forces today to stage a day-long pre-election protest to draw attention to the issue of university funding during the current Québec election campaign.

Teaching staff were asked to hold five- to ten-minute information sessions at the start of every class to outline the effects of the Québec government's "budget compressions" during the past five years, and more precisely, to explain how government cutbacks -- coupled with Concordia's "historic underfunding" -- are threatening to diminish the quality of education for the institution's 26,000 graduate and undergraduate students.

A student organized "mock funeral" (with the support of Concordia's administration and teaching staff) was also held -- at 3:00 p.m. -- in the lobby of the Henry F. Hall Building, 1455 de Maisonneuve Boulevard West. The symbolic "funeral march" around the building, complete with coffin and black arm bands, was designed to make everyone at Concordia (as well as politicians and the public) aware of the gravity of the University's funding problems and the need for corrective action.

Concordia University Students' Association (CUSA) Vice-Presidents François Desrosiers and Peter Wheeland say they are hopeful the day's activities will whip up enthusiasm for a series of major election rallies taking place on campus next week.

Liberal Party Education Critic Claude Ryan will address a noontime rally on Wednesday (November 27th) in Room H-110 of the Hall Building. Parti Qébécois Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Jean-Guy Rodrigue will take his turn on the hot seat later in the week, and an all-candidates meeting for the St-Louis riding -- where Concordia's downtown campus is located -- has been scheduled for next Tuesday (November 26th).

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This past Monday an all-candidates meeting was held for the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grace -- where Concordia's west-end campus is located. In a move that organizers hope will be repeated by other politicians next week, the riding's Liberal and NDP candidates, Reed Scowen and Michel Agnaieff, respectively, committed themselves to finding a new funding formula for Concordia.

"Our idea for a 'mock funeral' may be a bit premature in the sense that quality education isn't dead yet," says CUSA Communications V-P Peter Wheeland, "but if something isn't done soon to correct Concordia's funding problems, today's symbolic funeral will become tomorrow's reality. They way things stand now quality education at universities throughout Québec is dying a slow death.

"Many students find the issue of underfunding difficult to relate to on a day-to-day basis," he adds. "We need faculty members to drive home to students exactly how they have been -- and will be -- affected by budget compressions (such things as larger class size, reductions in lab time, reduced course offerings, and higher student-teacher ratios, among other things."

CUSA External V-P François Desrosiers also urged students, administrators and teaching staff to participate in election meetings (in their own ridings as well as those being held at Concordia) and question local candidates about their and their parties' position on Concordia's underfunding.

In keeping with the spirit of the day black arm bands were distributed in the Administration Building on Concordia's west-end campus, and on the mezzanine of the Hall Building downtown. The front page of the main University newspaper, The THURSDAY REPORT, was bordered in black today, and students, staff and faculty were encouraged to wear some article of black clothing to draw attention to today's protest activities.

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For further information contact KEN WHITTINGHAM, Interim Director, Public Relations Department (514) 848-4879

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

SOME QUICK FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT CONCORDIA UNDERFUNDING

1) In absolute terms university revenues have increased by 8% between 1981 and 1985. Because of inflation, however, the buying power of university grants has actually decreased by 7%.

2) Because of reductions imposed by the Québec government, Concordia is forced to operate on a budget that is almost 20% less in real dollars than it was four years ago. Considering that Concordia has always received less, per student, from the government than any other university in Québec, a reduction of 20% is an unacceptable burden.

3) Concordia's accumulated deficit of $17.2 million is 6.6 times larger than it was in 1981-82.

4) Concordia has the second-highest operating deficit of any university in Québec, just behind the Université de Montréal. In Concordia's case, however, the deficit represents a full 9.7% of total revenues, compared to 5.9% at the Université de Montréal.

5) Concordia educates approximately 12% of all Québec university students, yet its accumulated deficit represents a full 29% of the almost $60 million deficit that has been run up in recent years by the Québec university system.

6) Using 1981 as a base year, if Concordia had been funded at the same level as the Université de Montréal, Concordia would have received $99.3 million in operating grants instead of $82.9 million -- a difference of $16.4 million.

7) Despite the fact Concordia educates 12% of all university students in Québec, it receives less than 10% of the province's university education budget. Concordia is thus being penalized for its cost-efficient operation.

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FIGURE 1 (a)

Concordia University
Revenues and Expenses
1981-82 To 1984-85

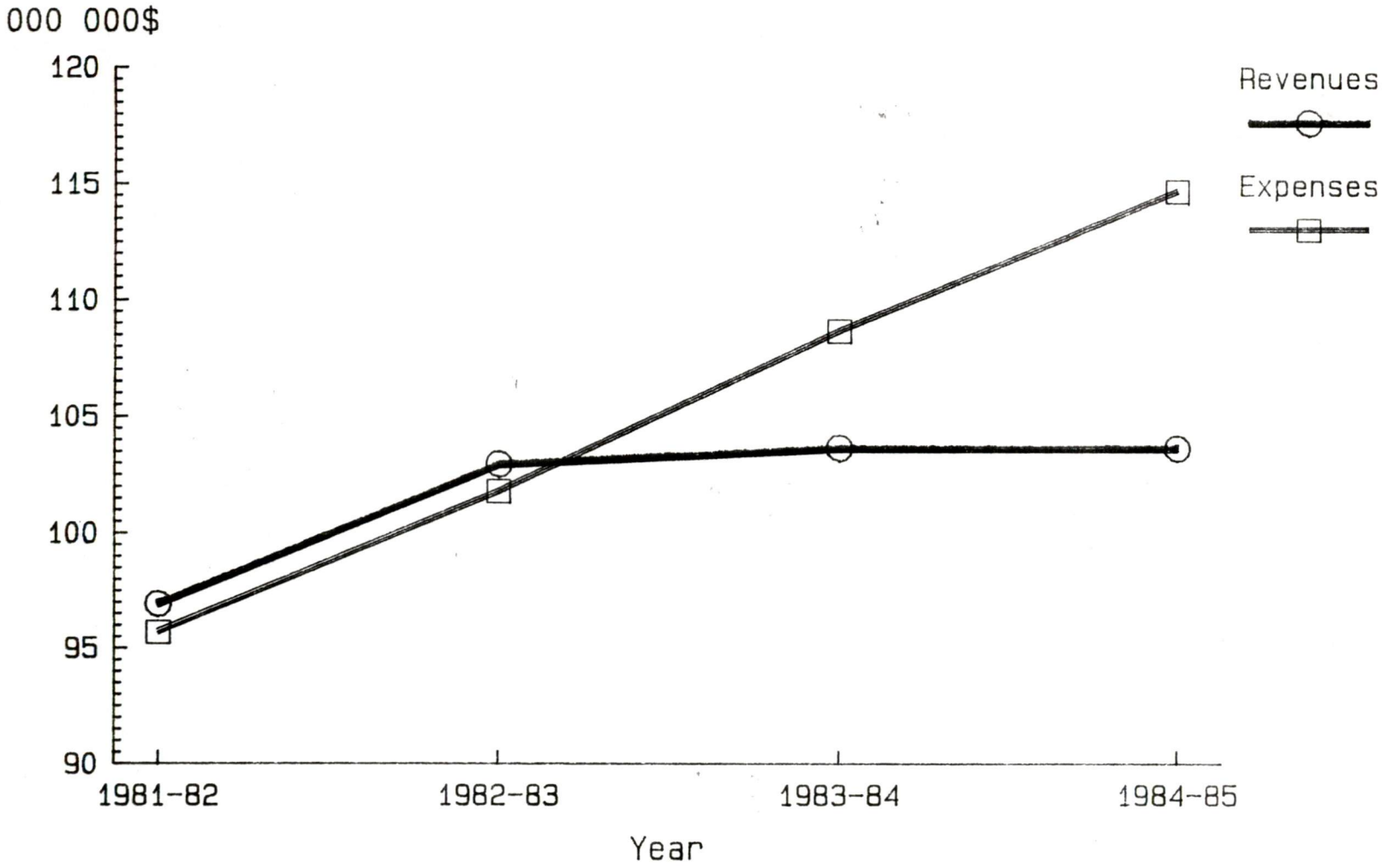
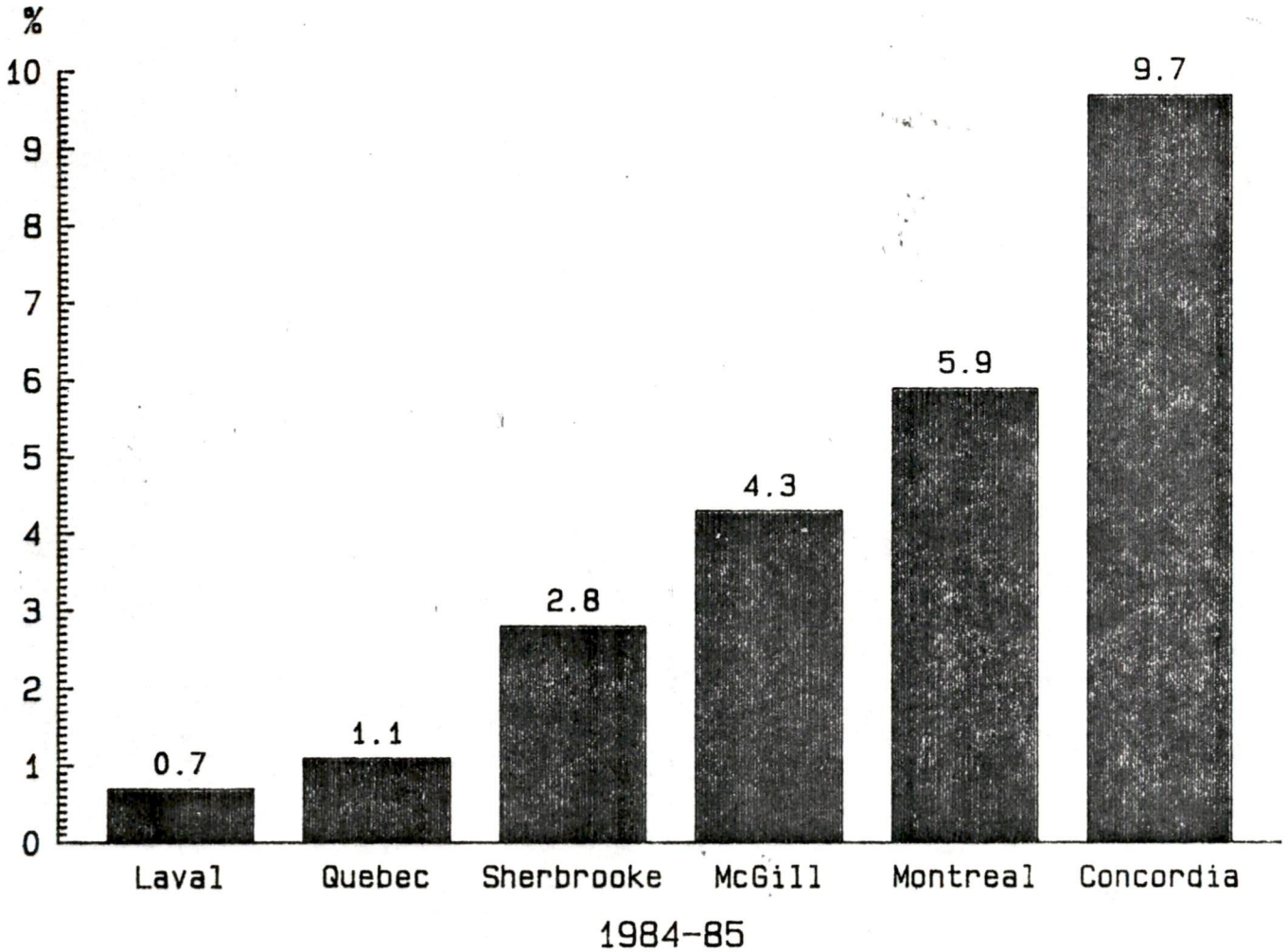


FIGURE 4

Deficits
As A Percentage Of Total Revenues



(sung to the tune of God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen)

God rest our u-ni-ver-sity
It died for lack of cash
We couldn't pay our bills one year
Our costs, we had to slash

So out the window went our profs,
our books we had to trash

REFRAIN

Oh tidings of government restraint,
That's our complaint,
Oh tidings of government restraint.

God rest our u-ni-ver-sity
We had to shut our door,
We owed the banks too many bucks
We'd lost the cutbacks war

The quality of education
hit the bottom floor

(refrain)

Go rest our u-ni-ver-sity
It used to be so fine
Concordia may not live long
And that's the bottom line

Unless the government reacts
And halts our slow decline

(refrain)

Will Pierre-Marc be our saviour
Or will it be Robert?
Will any Party hear our plea
Our cupboard's almost bare

Unless our funding changes soon
We haven't got a prayer

(refrain)